

Ideas evolve and minds change slowly. With patience and a supposition of good will, Williams believes, a shift can occur as space is created to reenvision and open up our landscape.

Williams occasionally mentions the role that faith communities can play in fostering positive proximity. Beacon, New York, for example, collectively celebrates the Jewish harvest festival of Sukkot by erecting a traditional sukkah in a public park. It becomes the venue for an array of classes, discussions, and workshops. This practice has laid a foundation for fruitful interfaith dialogue and action.

Faith communities are, Williams says, uniquely situated to encourage positive proximity:

Faith groups can argue that with the role conscience plays in all houses of worship, they can address issues of disenfranchisement, illness, disability, and economic hardships especially, and sometimes exclusively, very effectively within their own communities. There is a store of social capital they can build to very secure levels.

Such social capital is every bit as important as financial capital when it comes to revitalization efforts.

Nevertheless, one cannot overlook the necessity of financial funding. Williams defines what she calls “a piñata problem” in her discussion of Wilmington, Delaware: “There is great wealth, but it’s hanging from a high place, far away from the city commons.” Despite this admission, Williams fails to offer any concentrated treatment of the economic disparities at work in small towns.

The book’s abrupt ending is also a lost opportunity. I found myself wishing for something tangible: the inclusion of a succinct outline for action, a bibliography, or a compilation of resources to encourage aspiring conscious bridgers.

Perhaps the book’s greatest strength is to help readers locate the vitality of their own towns. Within that vitality there may yet be a hopeful way forward, “one coffee shop, dog run, and open-mike night at a time.”

BookMarks

Holy Solitude: Lenten Reflections with Saints, Hermits, Prophets, and Rebels

By Heidi Haverkamp
Westminster John Knox, 148 pp.,
\$14.00 paperback

“Solitude can be revolutionary,” writes Heidi Haverkamp. This Lenten devotional guide carries the wisdom of an author who has both experienced and taught practices of spiritual discernment. Haverkamp uses the stories of saints (from the Bible to the present day) to inspire reflection and suggest faith practices structured around the 40 days of Lent. From Elijah to Mary Magdalene to Mary of Egypt to Howard Thurman, the saints profiled in the book invite readers to enter into the traditional Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving in tangible ways, and always with an eye toward solitude—not as an excuse for quietism but as an instrument for “resistance to human evil and violence.”

Faith in Action: A Handbook for Activists, Advocates, and Allies

By the Faith in Action Writing Collective
Fortress, 168 pp., \$12.99 paperback

This primer on community justice work is written by 13 people of faith, but the book isn’t explicitly about religion. Rather, it’s about many of the most pressing issues that currently drive Christians to work actively for human dignity, equality, and care of the earth. Each four-page chapter focuses on an issue related to social justice: white supremacy, the gender wage gap, prisons, Native people’s rights, LGBT equality, access to water, bullying, climate change, and many others. Each chapter contains basic information, action tips, and questions for reflection (e.g., “Can disability be beautiful?”). The book’s illustrations portraying statistical information will appeal to visual learners and concrete thinkers.

**READ.
SHARE.
SUPPORT
THE
CENTURY.**

**Help us guarantee
that the CENTURY
will reach future
generations.**

- Give a one-time gift to the CENTURY.
- Become a CENTURY associate.
- Include the CENTURY in your will and estate plans.

For more information, contact
Heidi Baumgaertner by email at

advert@christiancentury.org

or by phone at (312) 263-7510, ext. 229.